Implementation of the common foreign and security policy - annual report 2021

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report by David McALLISTER (EPP, DE) on the implementation of the Common Foreign and Security Policy – annual report 2021.

Strengthening multilateral partnerships on global priorities

Members welcomed the EU's growing ambition and initiatives to take the lead in promoting global partnerships on key priorities and reiterated that the EU's foreign and security policy must ensure the implementation of the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). They also stressed the need to develop a truly strategic partnership between the EU and the UN on climate action and human rights and in the context of crisis management.

The EU is called on to:

- defend and promote democracy globally by leading by example, including by ensuring strict compliance with the principles of democracy, human rights and rule of law in all Member States;

- promote an alliance of democracies worldwide;

- develop its toolbox for countering foreign interference, propaganda and influence operations;

- further develop its leadership role in the defence and promotion of freedom, democracy and human rights in multilateral forums, and in particular the UN;

- put more focus on ensuring freedom of navigation and on measures focusing on de-escalation and prevention of armed conflict and military incidents at sea;

- promote a robust global health strategy that includes global and EU efforts to ensure better global preparedness and an effective response to upcoming crises and to secure free, fair, affordable and equitable access to vaccines around the world;.

Improving EU visibility and decision-making

The report underlined the need to establish a Security and Defence Union that would serve as a starting point for implementing a common European defence policy. The EU's foreign policy needs to have its own instruments on foreign affairs, human rights, and security and defence. Moreover, it needs to strengthen its ability to act efficiently, timely, proactively and independently, and to shape the EU's response to ongoing and upcoming challenges. The report also stressed the urgent need for the EU to set up a mechanism of **automatic exchange of information and intelligence** between the Member States and the EU on foreign affairs and security issues occurring outside the EU, including on terrorism which continues to be a threat to European values and security and requires a multidimensional approach.

European sovereignty

The report called for the EU to increase its strategic sovereignty in specific areas that are fundamental to the Union's continued pre-eminence on the international stage, such as the promotion of EU values,

fundamental rights, equitable trade, economics, security and technology, social justice, the green and digital transition, energy and its role in addressing the assertiveness of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes.

It also stressed the need to coherently link the EU's external actions and internal policies and reiterated its call for the creation of a European Security and Defence Union.

Members stressed the need to preserve European independence in various key technological areas and to put forward a pragmatic and autonomous approach to avoid dependencies and geopolitical coercion in critical technological sectors.

Geopolitical priorities

Russia

Members condemned direct and indirect involvement by Russia and other external actors in armed conflicts as well as hybrid attacks, occupations and military build-ups inside the region or on its borders with the region. They reiterated their condemnation of Russia's aggressive policies vis-à-vis Ukraine, notably the continuous financial and military support for armed formations in Donbas, the illegal occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, the blockade of the Azov Sea and the military build-up at the eastern border of Ukraine and on the Crimean peninsula.

The report called for a revival of the Minsk Process to end the military conflict in Eastern Ukraine and for continuous assistance to Ukraine in its security sector and military reforms,.

Turkey

Members remain deeply concerned by the Turkish Government's increasingly assertive foreign policy, which is repeatedly putting the country at odds with the EU as a whole, its individual Member States and with countries in the neighbourhood. If the current situation is not reversed, the Commission should recommend the formal suspension of accession negotiations with Turkey.

UK

While underlining the importance of the full implementation of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement, including the Protocol on Ireland and Northern Ireland and the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, Members remain open to further developing and strengthening the EU-UK cooperation framework, which could lead to an agreement on foreign security and defence policy and issues of shared concern.

China

The EU is called on to develop a more assertive, comprehensive and coherent EU-China strategy that unites all Member States and shapes relations with an increasingly assertive and interventionist China in the interest of the EU as a whole. The report noted with serious concern the recent display of force and escalating tensions in regional hotspots such as the South and East China Seas and the Taiwan Strait.

Afghanistan

The report undermined that the situation in Afghanistan is a wakeup call for the EU to reassess the international approach to nation-building abroad and strategically reshape an integrated approach of its external policies, to increase its share of responsibility in global security and to seek greater sovereignty in its foreign and security policy.

Parliamentary dimension of the EU's CFSP

Lastly, the report noted the specific contribution of the European Parliament to the EU's foreign and security policy through its parliamentary diplomacy assets, for example through its reports and resolutions, its dense network of standing interparliamentary bodies and its political dialogue with office-holders across the world. It affirmed that Parliament should make full use of its oversight and budgetary powers in the decisions of the Union in the international arena. The importance of Parliament's democracy support programmes which have strong potential to strengthen the EU's role around the world by engaging key political stakeholders was also highlighted.